

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 240290

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 26635 ACTION SECSTATE, INFO GENEVA,
HONGKONG, PARIS, VIENTIANE, DIA, JCRC, CINCPAC DTD 24 SEP 76.

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 26635

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ICRC CASC VS

SUBJECT: AMERICANS IN VIET-NAM: TUIKER GOUGELMANN

SUMMARY: CHIEF OF ICRC'S SAIGON OFFICE LEARNED OF DEATH OF
AMERICAN WHOM HE BELIEVES TO BE TUCKER GOUGELMANN, AT SAIGON'S
CHI HOA PRISON IN APPROX MID-AUGUST. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF MET SEPT 23 WITH FORMER ICRC REP SAIGON,
GUBERON, WHO CLOSED HIS OFFICE AND DEPARTED WITH LAST
ICRC EVACUATION FLIGHT SEPT 14. WE ARE REPORTING
PRINCIPAL POINTS OF CONVERSATION SEPTEL BUT BELIEVE COMMENTS
ON LONG-MISSING AMCIT TUCKER GOUGELMANN MERIT SPECIAL ATTEN-
TION.

2. GUBERON SAID HE HAS TAKEN CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL INTEREST
IN CASE OF GOUGELMANN, WITH WHOSE SISTER HE HAS BEEN MAIN-
TAINING ACTIVE CORRESPONDENCE. GUBERON NOTED THAT HE PREPARED
COMPLETE REPORT ON THE CSAF, WHICH HE FORWARDED TO GENEVA IN
MAY-JUNE OF THIS YEAR AND ASKED WHETHER WE HAD RECEIVED IT.

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EMBOFF REPLIED THAT, TO BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE,

WE HAD NOT. GUBERON BELIEVES THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS WERE WATCHING GOUGELMANN EVER SINCE TAKEOVER UNTIL HE WAS FINALLY ARRESTED AND PLACED IN CHI HOA PRISON IN SAIGON.

3. MOST SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION WHICH DEVELOPED IN CONVERSATION WAS THAT GUBERON HEARD IN APPROX MID-AUGUST THAT AN AMERICAN DIED SHORTLY BEFORE THAT TIME AT CHI HOA. SOURCE OF INFORMATION, WHOM GUBERON REFUSED TO IDENTIFY BUT MADE CLEAR WAS AN UNOFFICIAL RPT UNOFFICIAL ONE, INDICATED THAT THE PERSON DIED FROM ILLNESS RATHER THAN MISTREATMENT. GUBERON SAID THAT PRISON CONDITIONS (E.G. POOR FOOD RATION, NO MEDICINE, RAMPANT DISEASE) ARE SUCH IN VIET-NAM THAT HE FIRMLY BELIEVES THE REPORT. SINCE GOUGELMANN WAS THE ONLY AMERICAN GUBERON KNEW FOR CERTAIN TO BE IN CHI HOA, AND SINCE GOUGELMANN IS AN OLDER MAN WHO CONCEIVABLY MAY NOT BE AS STRONG UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS AS A YOUNGER PERSON, GUBERON CONCLUDED THAT THE REFERENCE HAD TO BE TO GOUGELMANN.

4. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT A VIETNAMESE WHOSE FATHER WAS A HIGH PRG OFFICIAL TOLD FRED GULDEN, WHO DEPARTED SAIGON AUGUST 1, THAT GOUGELMANN HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM CHI HOA AT BEGINNING OF JULY, IMPLYING, WITHOUT ACTUALLY SAYING SO, THAT HE HAD BEEN TAKEN TO THE NORTH (REFTEL). UPON REFLECTION, IT SEEMS TO US CONCEIVABLE THAT THIS "REMOVAL" COULD HAVE MEANT THAT THAT IS WHEN HE DIED, WITH THE IMPLICATION ABOUT BEING TAKEN NORTH REPRESENTING SHEER CONJECTURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, STORY TOLD TO GUBERON BY HIS INFORMANT COULD BE A DELIBERATE VIETNAMESE EFFORT TO MASK THE FACT THAT GOUGELMANN WAS INDEED REMOVED TO THE NORTH.

5. IT APPEARS THAT GUBERON HAS REPORTED ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION HE HAS ON THIS CASE TO HIS HEADQUARTERS. IF WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED IT, POSSIBLY US MISSION GENEVA COULD MAUE A SPECIAL REQUEST FOR IT. WITH THE CAUTION THAT SEEMS TYPICAL OF ICRC OFFICIALS, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT GUBERON WILL PROVIDE ANY MORE DETAILS TO US HERE. HE HIMSELF WILL ARRIVE IN GENEVA EARLY IN FIRST WEEK OF
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